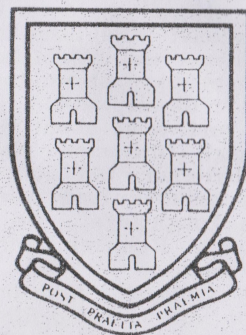


BALLYMENA'S SEVEN TOWERS?



*Historical notes
compiled by Eull Dunlop*

Identification of our Seven Towers has often been the cause of lively local debate, but here is one, "official", version of the story:

Ballymena, the City of the Seven Towers, is the natural geographical centre of County Antrim. Situated almost mid-way between Belfast and Portrush, the famous watering-place, which attracts visitors from all parts of the United Kingdom, it has a commanding position as a market town and also as a tourist centre. The origin of the above name being given to the town is as follows.

It is understood that Sir Alexander Shafto Adair, the owner of the Ballymena Estate and afterwards Baron Waveney, who lived in the Castle [at] Ballymena, was one afternoon outside Ballymena, on an elevated position from which there was a good view of the town, when he said to his friend who was with him, "There's the City of the Seven Towers" and pointed to the tower of the Episcopal Church, the tower of the Old Episcopal Church, the tower of the First Ballymena Presbyterian Church, the tower of the Roman Catholic Church, the tower of the Old Town Hall, the tower of the Braidwater Spinning Mill and the tower of the Castle (from the *Petition of the Urban District Council for Incorporation as a Municipal Borough*, 1937).

So let's hear more about those particular buildings, which are now discussed in an order which may suitably be followed on foot.

INTRODUCTION TO SECOND EDITION (1994) When the first edition of this pamphlet appeared, almost six years ago, an idea was still in its infancy. In the manifesto of 19 November 1988, reproduced in item (5) below, notice was given about the work lately initiated in the Historical Research Office. "Fundamentally we are trying to preserve material to hand on, even as diverse material has come down to us." Promises made have been promises kept. Tape recordings have been made, photographs have been taken, tours have been conducted and exhibitions large and small have been mounted. In Morrow's Shop we have shown that Ballymena can sustain a museum and patiently await further developments.

And what about publications? The first three items in the Ballymena Borough Gravestone Series, preserving inscriptions in Kellswater Reformed Presbyterian, Old Ballyclug and Cullybackey Old Methodist burying-grounds, have resulted from painstaking work by Andrew W Allen, Iner Dempsey and John Loughridge. On a wider front, the following constitute the Ballymena Borough Research Series: (1) Eull Dunlop, *Ballymena's Seven Towers?* (2) Andrew W Allen, *Forty-five Years in Ballymena Gas Works: as a long-established industry was being wound up* (1988), Gordon Wilson talked about his working-life; (3) Iner Dempsey, WJ Knowles (1832-1927): an introduction; (4) Eull Dunlop, *Inside Ballymena Town Hall* (1928), in preparation; (5) Eull Dunlop, *Some Town Hall History: with My Town Hall*, essays by Stewart Davison, Sarah S Wilson, Marjorie McDowell and James G Kenny; (6) Andrew W Allen, *Wartime Memories?* (7) Andrew W Allen, *Morrow's Shop: Mrs Sadie Purser talks about her father, Councillor Johnny Morrow, and his famous shop in Bridge Street*; (8) Eull Dunlop & Sylvia Hamilton, *The Early Years of Ballymena Workhouse, 1840-45*; (9) Eull Dunlop, *Ballymena Town Hall, 1924: Contemporary Accounts of the Laying of the Foundation Stone* by HRH the Duke of York; (10) Iner Dempsey, *Wartime Ballymena: notes compiled from the local press*; (11) Eull Dunlop, *Kells & Connor Primary School: a report of the Official Opening on 1 October 1940*, with (12) Andrew W Allen, *Churches, Halls and Schools around Kells & Connor: a check-list of buildings or former sites*; (13) Debroy Barr, *Sandy Grant of Bridge Street*; (14) Andrew W Allen, *A Short History of Ballymena Gas Works*; (15) Eull Dunlop, *Sandy's Story: Early 'Meemoirs' of Alderman Sandy Spence, longest-serving Mayor of Ballymena*; (16) Eull Dunlop, *St Patrick's Parish Church, Ballymena* (to be revised); (17) Eull Dunlop, *On the Trail of Timothy Eaton (1834-1907)*; (18) Eull Dunlop (ed), *John Luke's Harryville*; (19) Andrew W Allen, *Farming in County Antrim*; (20) William Shaw, *Cullybackey and District*; (21) *Ballymena Almanac & Directory, 1891*; (22) Hugh McWilliams, *Ballymena* (a poem, 1830s); (23) *Ballymena in 1842: James O'Hagan's Map*; (24) Eull Dunlop, *Mair Sandy: Further 'Meemoirs' of the Longest Serving Mayor*; and (25) Andrew W Allen, Joe Craig: *Wizard of Tune, The Professor, Mr Norton*. Additional items are proposed for publication, for there is still much to do. ED

— PRESERVING OUR HERITAGE —

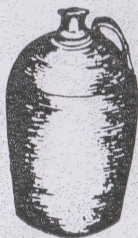


Ballymena Borough Council, 'Ardeevin', 80 Galgorm Road, Ballymena,
County Antrim, Northern Ireland, BT42 1AB



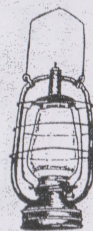
BALLYMENNA

Ballymena Borough Council Museum occupies Morrow's Shop on Bridge Street, beside the Town Hall. John Morrow was born in 1880. He served his time to the drapery business in Gordon Black's, Drapers and Outfitters, Church Street; and started his own business in the premises on Bridge Street in 1902. John Morrow was a prominent citizen of the town; and represented the Harryville Ward as Councillor for the years 1914 to 1930 and 1935 to 1963. He was Chairman of the Ballymena Urban District Council for the year 1926; and he died in 1964. His daughter, Mrs Sadie Purser, continued the business until 1988, when she retired, and sold the property to Ballymena Borough Council.



As part of the initiative to preserve and present local culture and history the Ballymena Borough Council has developed the Museum in Morrow's Shop.

Various aspects of local history are covered; and there is an extensive wartime display. A bottle collection is on view; and also a range of artefacts which includes a Victorian letterbox, a model of Ballymena Castle, and David Herbison's headstone.



The Museum is open to the public; and visits by school parties are encouraged. All pamphlets in the Borough Council Research Series are on sale in the Museum. The staff are most appreciative of the artefacts which have been presented to the Museum, and look forward to receiving many other interesting items for display.

Andrew W Allen

Preserving
Our Heritage



BALLYMENNA

(1) AT THE FOUR CORNERS:

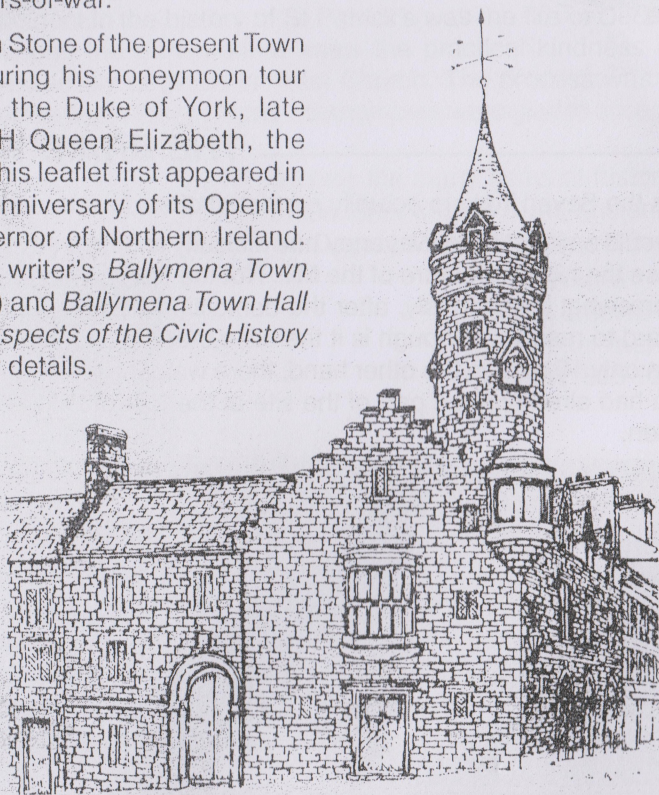
THE OLD TOWN HALL

The site of the present Town Hall is the historic centre of Ballymena.

We may wonder about the traditions which say that Patrick founded a church here, mid-way between Connor and Cullybackey, or that the first ever shop in the village of Kinviltown stood at what our recent forebears often called the Four Corners; but we can affirm that this was the site of the Market House (built 1684?), which, according to *Old Ballymena*, was mightily besieged and spectacularly burnt in 1798.

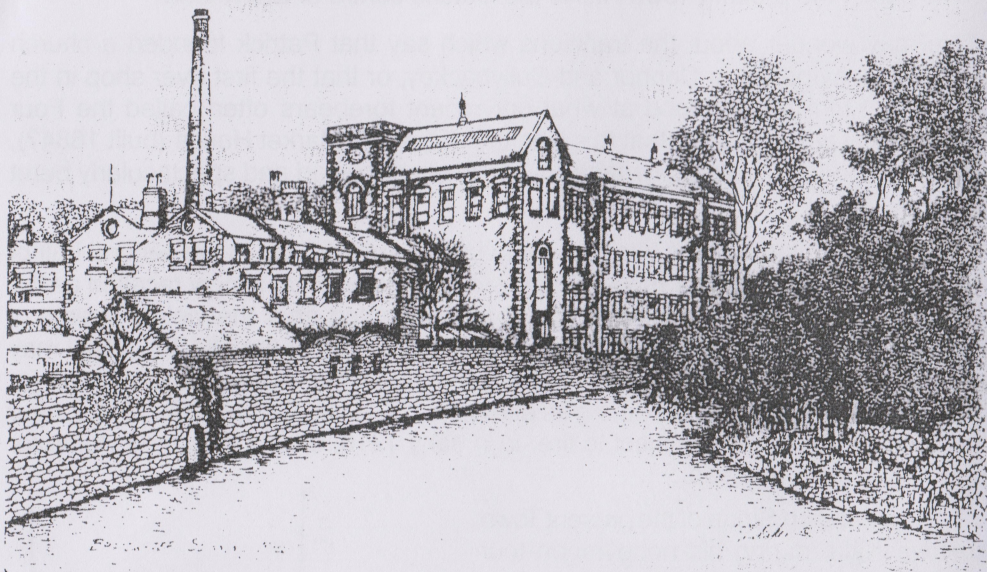
The greater history of the site has yet to be researched, but in the second half of the nineteenth century the Town Commissioners met in what is now recalled as the Old Town Hall, presumably a building much renovated after the violent events of earlier days. Some description of the internal disposition of the Old Town Hall may be found in *Ballymena Sketches* (1992). Here it can be recounted that a cell (or 'black hole') was discovered during its demolition. That was in the early 1920s, after the site had again been subject to fire, *ie* in early 1919, after a Welcome Home for returning prisoners-of-war.

The Foundation Stone of the present Town Hall was laid, during his honeymoon tour (July 1924), by the Duke of York, late husband of HRH Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother. This leaflet first appeared in 1988, the 60th Anniversary of its Opening by the first Governor of Northern Ireland. See the present writer's *Ballymena Town Hall 1924* (1990) and *Ballymena Town Hall 1928 and other aspects of the Civic History* (1984) for further details.



Drawings courtesy of James Milliken

(2) AT THE FOOT OF BRIDGE STREET:



THE BRAID WATER MILL

Perhaps the Seven Towers actually consisted of six towers and one chimney?

Some would say that Lord Waveney had difficulty finding a seventh landmark and so he chose the highest feature of the Mill. Not the tower which survived for a time, though somewhat precariously, after the demolition of 1984, but a chimney? The issue is hard to resolve, although is it the case that the chimney of recent memory dated from only 1910? On the other hand, there was apparently an earlier chimney, one which had already been part of the site at the foot of Bridge Street, known as Bell's Green.

It was there in 1866 that the Braid Water Spinning Company Ltd, including businessmen with such famous local names as Patrick, Young and Raphael, saw their first, five-storey, building rise. The premises on the Harryville side of the Braid, still operational, date from only the first decades of the 20th century.

Built in what was once a famous linen town, the Mill has gone through various phases, both of management and materials, but its tower was for some a consistent reminder of the original septet of civic features. Others, interested in social rather than architectural history, were moved to reflect ruefully on earlier industrial conditions. One thing is certain: that the Braid Water Mill towered over local life for a very long time.

See Colman O'Hagan's article in *Mid-Antrim, Part 2*, pages 133-37, for further details.

(3) UP CASTLE STREET:

ST PATRICK'S CHURCH

Newly refurbished in 1988, a fit place indeed for a peal of twelve bells, the tower of "the Church of Ireland" is as impressive as the history of St Patrick's is remarkable.

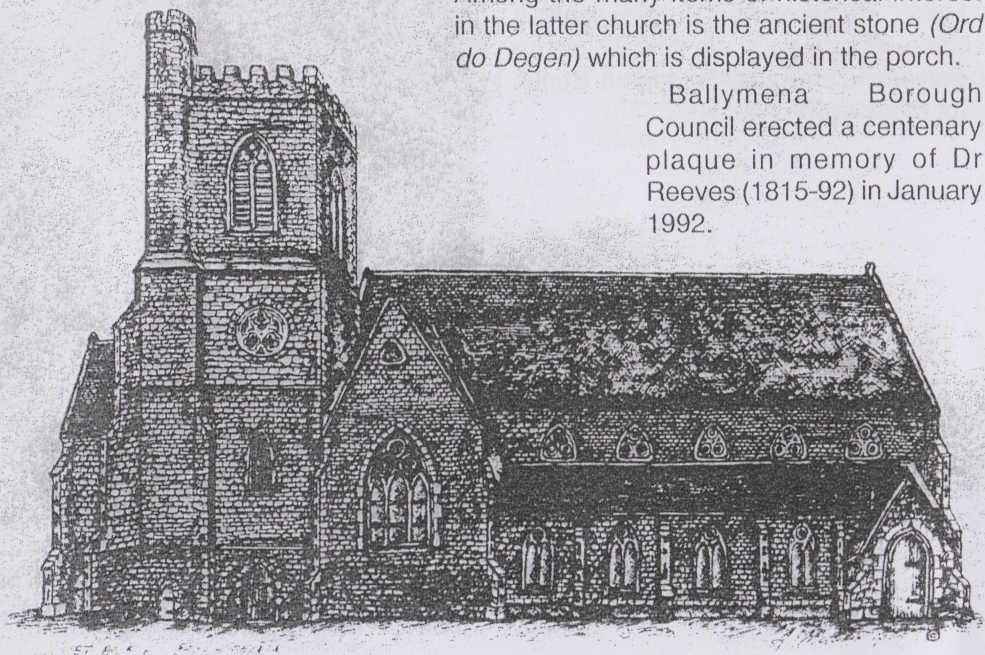
The Old Parish Church off Church Street having become inadequate for the needs of the "Protestant" people of this parish of Kilconriola, the Adair of the day gave ground on the Demesne for the erection of its successor. As recorded by the incumbent at the time, the antiquary and diocesan schoolmaster, the Rev William Reeves, the foundation stone was laid by Colonel Adair (later Lord Waveney) on 17 March 1853 and the building was consecrated by Bishop Knox on 2 August 1855. That the erection was completed at all was due to additional financial support from Adair.

There is a sad story associated with the consecration of St Patrick's. At the first funeral service to be held there, the widowed party, to his great devastation, was Reeves himself, for his wife Emma had died soon after the birth of their ninth child. Her grave may be seen behind (6) the Old Parish Church.

Another sad incident in the history of St Patrick's was the fire of December 1879. In their time of need the parishioners knew the practical kindness of the local Presbyterians, especially of those in West Church. The process was reversed in 1926, when, after the fire in West Church, its members were glad to accept temporary accommodation at St Patrick's.

Among the many items of historical interest in the latter church is the ancient stone (*Ord do Degen*) which is displayed in the porch.

Ballymena Borough Council erected a centenary plaque in memory of Dr Reeves (1815-92) in January 1992.



(4) GONE FROM THE DEMESNE:

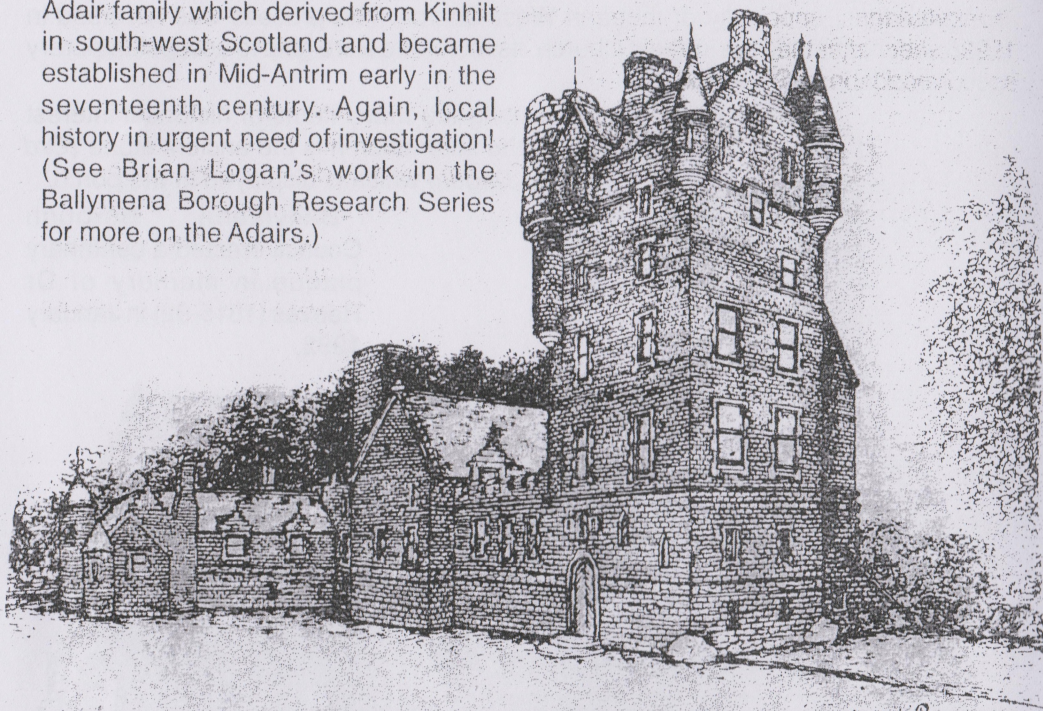
BALLYMENA CASTLE

Does any building, present or past, provoke more discussion than Ballymena Castle, which was demolished in the 1950s?

While schoolboys are fascinated by photographs of its towers and turrets, some of their elders have spoken of public "vandalism" permitting the Scottish baronial edifice to decay. Of course, the story is not a simple one. The Castle had been vacant at times (and there was actual vandalism), but the sense of loss still lingers. Surely it is imperative that there be immediate recording of memories of the Castle which stood high above the Braid, near the site now occupied by the Seven Towers (!) Leisure Centre?

Not that the late lamented Castle was ancient. It dated from only the last third of the nineteenth century, replacing an earlier edifice which had stood on the Demesne where the new St Patrick's Church rose in the 1850s. Apparently its ruins had been cleared during the Famine. Was that earlier Castle the one which is said to have been burned down in 1720?

The story of the first and second Ballymena Castles is the story of the Adair family which derived from Kinhill in south-west Scotland and became established in Mid-Antrim early in the seventeenth century. Again, local history in urgent need of investigation! (See Brian Logan's work in the Ballymena Borough Research Series for more on the Adairs.)

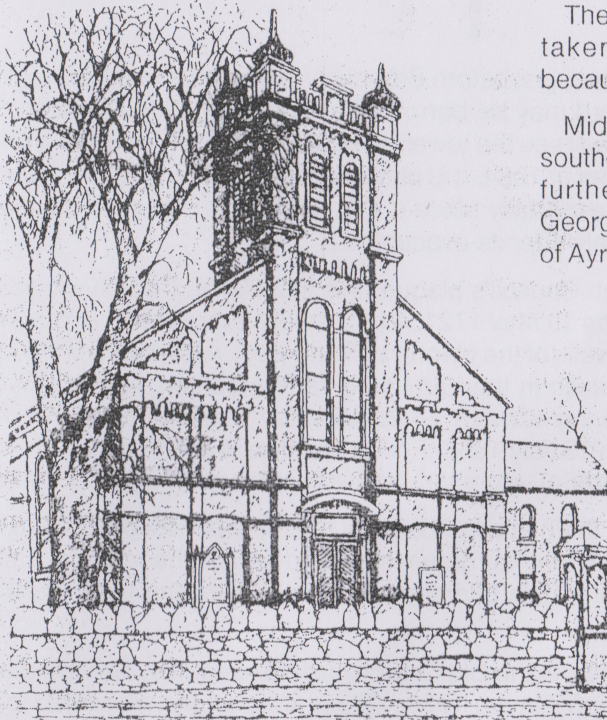


(5) ALONG MEETING-HOUSE LANE:

FIRST BALLYMENA PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

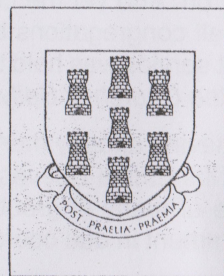
"The population are chiefly descended from the Scotch emigrants", observed a visitor in the 1830s. The Scottishness of Ballymena, the town developed by the Adairs of Kinhill, is still self-evident, whether you consider the accent of its people or the preponderance of Presbyterian churches.

To assert that First Ballymena is the oldest such congregation is to state the obvious, but note the date 1627 high above its front door. Of course, this is not the year in which the present building was erected, but it is taken as the date at which the first Presbyterian minister, the Rev George Dunbar, was settled in Ballymena. For details of him and his successors see the impressive plaque in the vestibule. Notice, for example, the two Dills (both with the initials S M), local representatives of a veritable dynasty in the Presbyterian ministry, and Charles Davey, father of the controversial polymath, Professor J E Davey of Assembly's College, Belfast. Note, too, the old town bell now displayed in the same vestibule and, in the church proper, David Ker's eighteenth-century clock and the five memorial windows installed by the sons of John Young (d 1915). The former manse of First Ballymena stands beside the front gate of St Patrick's and its past incumbents are remembered at the Dissenting Ministers' Plot in the Old Churchyard.



The tower of First Ballymena was taken down many years ago because of its unsafe condition.

Mid-Antrim's natural links with south-west Scotland deserve to be further explored. For example, George Dunbar had been minister of Ayr.



(6) OFF CHURCH STREET:

THE OLD PARISH CHURCH



Proceed up Church Street and, just before Broadway, turn right into Church Entry. The key of the Old Churchyard may be borrowed from a local shop. Through the splendid avenue of trees you will see the tower of the Old Parish Church, which was refurbished by Enterprise Ulster in 1984. It is pleasing to have some reminder of the predecessor of St Patrick's, especially since it may have had a less sympathetic public in the period immediately after its evacuation.

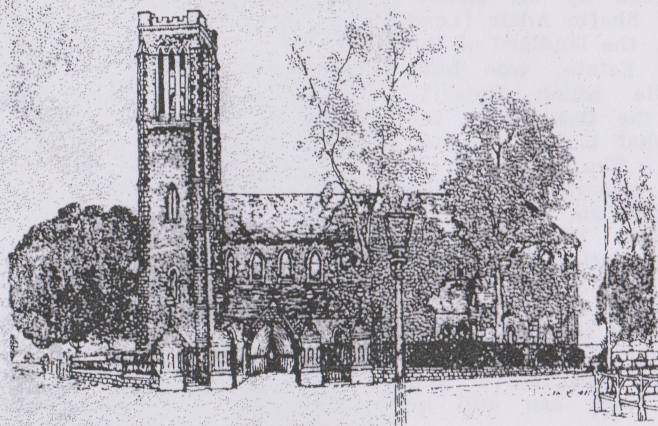
As recorded on the Borough Council's plaque, this first Parish Church within the town limits was consecrated on 10 May 1721. A full century later a tower and gallery were added and in 1827 the walls of the oblong building were raised and a new roof put on. And yet the church which in the early years of the century had seen very small congregations became increasingly inadequate for "Protestant" needs. The last service was held there on 25 July 1855. For further details see Reeves' *Memoir of the Church of Ballymena* (1854), reprinted for the centenary (1992) of his death.

Having already mentioned, in (3) above, the early death, at a most poignant time, of Mrs Emma Reeves, we note that her grave is located behind the tower. It is only one of many of great interest in this burying-ground, all deserving more detailed comment in due course.

Timely work on the headstones in the Old Churchyard was begun by Sixth Formers from Cambridge House Boys' GS in the 1980s. The transcriptions were later to be published within the terms of the Borough Council's historical initiative.

(7) "THE CHAPEL":

ALL SAINTS ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH



The origins of this, the second chapel on the site at the corner of the Broughshane and Cushendall Roads, were detailed in an *Historical Sketch of the Parish of Kirkinriola* (1969) and, long before that, in O'Laverty's *Down and Connor*, Volume III (1884). The latter work, it may be noted, was dedicated to Dr Patrick Dorrian, the bishop of the day who, "by the erection of churches, monastic institutions and schools, [had] restored almost to its ancient splendour the diocese of Down and Connor". For there's a local connection.

It was Dorrian, then co-adjutor to Bishop Denvir, who, on 11 November 1860, preached the evening sermon in All Saints, the latter having dedicated that new Gothic chapel in the morning. The parish priest at the time was the redoubtable Father John Lynch (1805-89), the Portglenone man who, while stationed in Ahoghill, had built a new church there and had procured a mass station in Cullybackey. Like Father Bernard McAuley, who built the first chapel (1827) in Ballymena, Lynch was a ready controversialist, not least in the days of the 1859 Revival. While he was responsible for the provision of many parochial facilities (eg the Catholic school at Harryville Bridge), he was not the priest who had completed the work on the tower. His successor, Father Alexander McMullan (died 1908), was responsible for the installation of the bell and also for the provision of major furnishings within the edifice and for the erection of walls, railings and gates without.

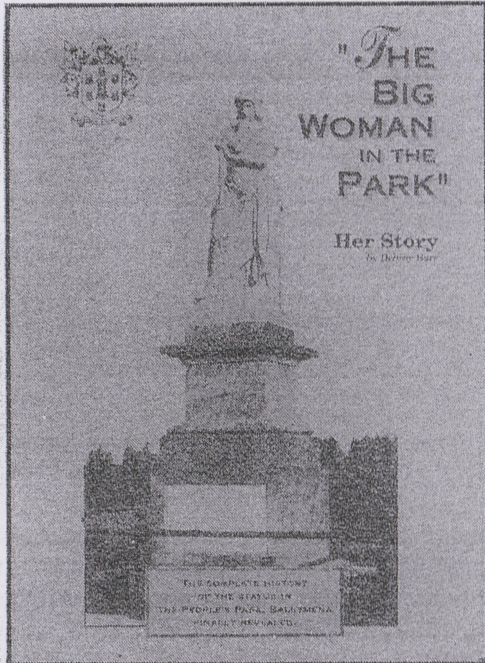
For a pen portrait of McMullan, see S A Blair's article, *Ballymena Guardian*, 2 June 1983; for a portrayal of the period in which All Saints was built and for an evaluation of both Dorrian and his predecessor, see Ambrose Macaulay, *Patrick Dorrian* (1987).

(c) E Dunlop and J Milliken. Published at Ballymena Town Hall on the Sixtieth Anniversary (20 November 1988) of its Opening. Revised and enlarged for the Seventh Ballymena Arts Festival, October 1994.

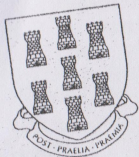
THE PEOPLE'S PARK The Park was a gift to the people of Ballymena by Sir Robert Alexander Shafto Adair (Lord Waveney), the landlord of the Ballymena Estate, who built the Castle which formerly stood in the Demesne at the end of what is now Trostan Avenue. The Park covers fifty-five square acres and was opened on Tuesday, 9 August 1870. Its landscaping and ornamentation was largely designed by Sir Robert himself, a man well versed in the Arts and Sciences and it is the only place left to us where his imaginative and generous work can still be seen.

At the entrance, on the Ballymoney Road, stands the gatehouse. This was built to house the employee, whose duty it was to keep the Park in good order and to ring the bell at dusk every night, to warn those within that the gates would soon be locked. The house was designed to match the style of Adair's Castle and some interesting features can be seen on its facade. The first to catch the eye is the Seven Towers crest. This was designed by Adair himself and features his Castle in the centre, surrounded by six other towers, representing buildings in the town. At the left of this can be seen the Shafto Adair coat of arms and the legend SA, representing the interlocking of the Shafto and Adair families.

Enter the Park for a leisurely stroll. As you walk along the path you will come to the fountain. This was the gift of Sir Robert's nephew, Sir Frederick Edward Shafto Adair, a later successor to the Ballymena Estate. Originally, water issued from the mouths of the fish and folk could drink from mugs hung on chains. Walk on down the path and you will come to a stone bridge. Go over the bridge and up Todd's Hill, at the pinnacle of which stands a statue. Known locally as the Big Woman in the Park, she is actually the muse of Armed Science. The original Armed Science was designed by Sir Shafto Adair, as a gift to the Royal Artillery in which he served, and was presented to them at the Royal Artillery Barracks, Woolwich, where she still stands. This copy was erected to commemorate the visit of the Lord Lieutenant and his wife to Ballymena in 1872. Earl and Countess Spencer were direct ancestors of the present Princess of Wales, Lady Diana Spencer, so the statue provides a tangible link between Ballymena and the Royal Family. Now walk over to the lookout tower above the dam. Across the water you will see the Alexander Cottage Hospital, another gift to the town from Lord Waveney. Here you can also watch the wild fowl on the water. After this, descend from the hill, take the path straight across from the bridge and enjoy a leisurely walk around the park. ————— *Debroy Barr* (author of the above history) —————



Preserving *Our* Heritage



MORROW'S SHOP MUSEUM



13 - 15 BRIDGE STREET BALLYMENA



BALLYMENA BOROUGH COUNCIL

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